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QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Rapporteur: Mr. Anuson CHINVANNO (Thailand)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 3rd plenary meeting, on 24 September 1993, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its forty-eighth session the item entitled "Questions relating to information" and to allocate it to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

2. The Fourth Committee considered the item at its 8th to 14th, 17th and 18th meetings, held between 25 October and 15 November 1993 (see A/C.4/48/SR.8-14, 17 and 18).

3. The Fourth Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Committee on Information; 1/

(b) Report of the Secretary-General (A/48/407).

4. At the 8th meeting, on 25 October, the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information made an introductory statement on the activities of the Department of Public Information (see A/C.4/48/SR.8).

5. At the same meeting, the Acting Chairman of the Committee on Information introduced the report of the Committee and the draft resolutions contained therein (A/48/21, para. 86). The Director of the Liaison Office of the United

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1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/48/21).

Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also made a statement.

6. At the 14th meeting, on 1 November, the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information made a concluding statement (see A/C.4/48/SR.14).

7. At the 18th meeting, on 15 November, the Officer-in-Charge of the Department of Public Information made a statement (see A/C.4/48/SR.18).

II. CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS

8. At the 13th meeting, on 29 October, the Chairman of the Fourth Committee drew attention to document A/C.4/48/L.15 on the programme budget implications relating to draft resolution B contained in document A/48/21, paragraph 86.

9. At the 17th meeting, on 11 November, the Chairman drew attention to a draft decision contained in document A/C.4/48/L.17.

10. At the 18th meeting, on 15 November, on the proposal of the Chairman, the Fourth Committee decided, by general agreement, to consider and take a decision at one and the same time on the five draft proposals before it relating to the item.

11. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted, without a vote, draft resolutions A and B (see para. 13) and draft decisions I and II (see para. 14), contained in paragraphs 86 and 87 to 89 of document A/48/21, as well as draft decision A/C.4/48/L.17 (see para. 14, draft decision III).

12. At the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Sudan (see A/C.4/48/SR.18).

III. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE (FOURTH COMMITTEE)

13. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

DRAFT RESOLUTION A

Information in the service of humanity

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the comprehensive and important report of the Committee on Information, 2/

Also taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information, 3/

Urges that all countries, organizations of the United Nations system as a whole and all others concerned, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information, as well as to those of the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media, deeply concerned by the disparities existing between developed and developing countries and the consequences of every kind arising from those disparities that affect the capability of the public, private or other media and individuals in developing countries to disseminate information and communicate their views and their cultural and ethical values through endogenous cultural production, as well as to ensure the diversity of sources and their free access to information, recognizing the call in this context for what in the United Nations and at various international forums has been termed "a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process", should:

(a) Cooperate and interact with a view to reducing existing disparities in information flows at all levels by increasing assistance for the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with due regard for their needs and the priorities attached to such areas by those countries, and in order to enable them and the public, private or other media in developing countries to develop their own information and communication policies freely and independently and increase the participation of media and individuals in the communication process, and to ensure a free flow of information at all levels;

(b) Ensure for journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks and condemn resolutely all attacks against them;

(c) Provide support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from public, private and other media in developing countries;

2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/48/21).

3/ A/48/407.

(d) Enhance regional efforts and cooperation among developing countries, as well as cooperation between developed and developing countries, to strengthen communication capacities and to improve the media infrastructure and communication technology in the developing countries, especially in the areas of training and dissemination of information;

(e) Aim, in addition to bilateral cooperation, at providing all possible support and assistance to the developing countries and their media, public, private or other, with due regard to their interests and needs in the field of information and to action already adopted within the United Nations system, including:

(i) The development of the human and technical resources that are indispensable for the improvement of information and communication systems in developing countries and support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes, such as those already operating under both public and private auspices throughout the developing world;

(ii) The creation of conditions that will enable developing countries and their media, public, private or other, to have, by using their national and regional resources, the communication technology suited to their national needs, as well as the necessary programme material, especially for radio and television broadcasting;

(iii) Assistance in establishing and promoting telecommunication links at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, especially among developing countries;

(iv) The facilitation, as appropriate, of access by the developing countries to advanced communication technology available on the open market;

(f) Provide full support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which should support both public and private media.

DRAFT RESOLUTION B

United Nations public information policies and activities

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming the primary role of the General Assembly in elaborating, coordinating and harmonizing United Nations policies and activities in the field of information,

Also reaffirming that the Secretary-General should ensure that the activities of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, as the focal point of the public information tasks of the United Nations, are strengthened and improved, keeping in view the purposes and principles of the

Charter of the United Nations, the priority areas defined by the General Assembly and the recommendations of the Committee on Information,

Taking note of all reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session,

1. Decides to consolidate the role of the Committee on Information as its main subsidiary body mandated to make recommendations relating to the work of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat;

2. Calls upon the Secretary-General, in respect of the United Nations public information policies and activities, to implement the following recommendations in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions and in this regard to ensure that the Department of Public Information:

(a) Continues to disseminate information about the activities of the United Nations in coordination with the information services of other relevant agencies in accordance with the United Nations medium-term plan, the programme budget and their relevant revisions, pertaining, inter alia, to:

(i) International peace and security;

(ii) Disarmament;

(iii) Peace-keeping operations and peacemaking;

(iv) Decolonization and the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the light of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism;

(v) The promotion and protection of human rights and in that context the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights;

(vi) The elimination of all forms of racial discrimination;

(vii) The advancement of the status of women and their role in society;

(viii) The promotion of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

(ix) Problems of economic and social development, as well as international economic cooperation aimed at resolving external debt problems;

(x) The least developed countries;

(xi) The environment and development;

(xii) The elimination of foreign occupation;

(xiii) The campaign against terrorism in all its forms in line with General Assembly resolution 40/61 of 9 December 1985;

(xiv) International efforts against drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking;

(xv) Crime prevention and criminal justice;

(xvi) Support for the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and for the tremendous efforts of the African countries aimed at recovery and development, as well as the positive response by the international community to alleviate the serious economic situation prevailing in Africa;

(xvii) International efforts towards the total eradication of apartheid and support for the establishment of a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa and, where necessary, the role of the United Nations in this context;

(xviii) United Nations activities pertaining to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine in particular, also including current developments in that region and the ongoing peace process;

(b) Provides the necessary level of information support for the activities of the United Nations in situations requiring immediate and special response;

(c) Continues its efforts at promoting an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations system among the peoples of the world and at strengthening the positive image of the system as a whole;

(d) Continues its briefings, assistance and orientation programmes for broadcasters, journalists and other media professionals from developing countries focused on United Nations-related issues;

(e) Provides, on the basis of its activities, information to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization about new forms of cooperation, at the regional and subregional levels, for the training of media professionals and for the improvement of the information and communication infrastructures of developing countries;

(f) Continues its policies of cooperation with all agencies of the United Nations system, in particular with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization;

(g) Continues its policies of cooperation with the news agencies in and of the developing countries, in particular the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries;

3. Welcomes the decision by the Department of Public Information to establish a task force to look into the allocation of office space to the media at United Nations Headquarters;

4. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General regarding the continuous and major publications of the Department of Public Information 4/ and urges all efforts to ensure timely production and dissemination of its major

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4/ A/AC.198/1993/5.

publications, in particular the UN Chronicle, the Yearbook of the United Nations and Africa Recovery, maintaining consistent editorial independence and accuracy, taking necessary measures to ensure that its output contains adequate, objective and equitable information about issues before the Organization, reflecting divergent opinions wherever they occur;

5. Expresses regret at the circumstances leading to the closing down of Development Forum, and encourages the Secretary-General to suggest ways and means to revive Development Forum, which has continued to receive a mandate of the General Assembly, and report thereon to the Committee on Information;

6. Requests the management of the Department of Public Information to review the Department's publications and proposals for publications to ensure that all publications fulfil an identifiable need, that they do not duplicate other publications inside or outside the United Nations system, and that they are produced in a cost-effective manner, and report to the Committee on Information at its sixteenth substantive session;

7. Reaffirms the importance attached by Member States to the role of United Nations information centres in effectively and comprehensively disseminating information about United Nations activities and the optimization of the resources allocated to the Department of Public Information;

8. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its sixteenth session for the purpose of evaluating the need for any subsequent integration, the results of the current trial of integrating 18 United Nations information centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General. 5/ The report should also contain the views of the host countries, bearing in mind the concerns of Member States that the integration of the United Nations information centres with the United Nations offices could adversely affect their functions in the developing countries;

9. Reaffirms the role of the General Assembly in relation to the opening of new United Nations information centres and invites the Secretary-General, as well, to make such recommendations as he may judge necessary regarding the establishment and location of new United Nations information centres;

10. Requests the Secretary-General to ensure that his proposals relating to the structure, functions and activities of the seven United Nations interim offices in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan fully comply with the mandates of the relevant General Assembly resolutions pertaining to operational activities and dissemination of information, taking into account the observations and recommendations of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, 6/ General Assembly decision 47/469 of 6 May 1993 and relevant General Assembly resolutions, especially resolution 47/199 of 22 December 1992;

5/ A/AC.198/1993/7.

6/ A/47/7/Add.16.

11. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General regarding the allocation of resources to the United Nations information centres in 1992 7/ and would appreciate information on the status of the relevant General Assembly resolutions, as well as a detailed breakdown of resource deployment between centres and, while welcoming the action by some Governments with regard to the financial and material support for United Nations information centres in their respective capitals, calls upon the Secretary-General to study ways and means to rationalize and effect equitable disbursement of available resources to all United Nations information centres and report thereon to the Committee on Information at its sixteenth substantive session;

12. Notes the substantial contribution by the Government of Poland and requests the Secretary-General to continue to consult with the Polish authorities, with a view to finalizing arrangements for a United Nations information component at Warsaw;

13. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General regarding the enhancing, reactivation and establishment of United Nations information centres 8/ and again calls upon the Secretary-General to implement fully and expeditiously the recommendation contained in paragraph 10 of resolution 47/73 B of 14 December 1992 regarding:

(a) The establishment of a United Nations information centre at Sana'a;

(b) The reactivation of the United Nations information centre at Tehran;

(c) The enhancement of the information centres at Bujumbura, Dar es Salaam and Dhaka, and submit the implementation report to the Committee on Information at its sixteenth substantive session;

14. Further calls upon the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the aforementioned recommendation to the sixteenth session of the Committee on Information;

15. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General 9/ and encourages continued enhanced cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the University for Peace in Costa Rica as a focal point for promoting United Nations activities and disseminating United Nations information materials;

16. Takes note of the requests by Bulgaria, Gabon, Haiti and Slovakia for information components;

17. Expresses full support to the wide and prompt coverage of United Nations activities through a continuation of United Nations press releases;

7/ A/AC.198/1993/6.

8/ A/AC.198/1993/9.

9/ A/AC.198/1993/9, paras. 17 and 18.

18. Calls upon the Secretary-General to enhance the efficiency of regional radio units in the Department of Public Information;

19. Calls upon the Secretary-General to make every effort to create conditions more conducive to achieving parity by appropriate utilization of existing equipment in the press coverage of meetings in English and French;

20. Takes note of the recommendations and observations by Member States contained in the report of the Secretary-General 10/ and invites Member States that wish to do so to submit their observations and suggestions to the Secretary-General by 1 January 1994, on ways and means of furthering the development of communications infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with a view to consolidating recent experience in the field of international cooperation aimed at enabling them to develop their own information and communication capacities freely and independently, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its sixteenth session;

21. Recommends, in order to facilitate continued contact between the Department of Public Information and the Committee on Information between sessions, that the Bureau of the Committee on Information, together with representatives of each regional group, the Group of 77 and China, in close contact with members of the Committee on Information, should meet, as required, and consult at periodic intervals with the Department of Public Information;

22. Supports decision 5 of the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development, requesting the Secretary-General to develop and launch, on a priority basis, in cooperation with relevant specialized agencies, funds and programmes, a specific programme of public information on the core issues of the World Summit for Social Development as well as on its objectives;

23. Supports the decision of the Preparatory Committee for the International Conference on Population and Development, to be held at Cairo in 1994, requesting the Secretary-General to develop and launch, on a priority basis, a coordinated public information programme, in cooperation with competent United Nations bodies and specialized agencies;

24. Takes note of the request by Belarus and Ukraine to consider the development and implementation of a system-wide programme for the tenth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster in 1996;

25. Also requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its sixteenth session in 1994 and to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session in 1994, on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution;

10/ A/AC.198/1993/2.

26. Decides that the next session of the Committee on Information should last 12 working days and invites the Bureau of the Committee to explore ways and means of making optimum utilization of the Committee's time;

27. Requests the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session;

28. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its forty-ninth session the item entitled "Questions relating to information".

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14. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) also recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft decisions:

Increase in the membership of the Committee on Information

DRAFT DECISION I

The General Assembly decides to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 81 to 82 members and decides to appoint Gabon as a member of the Committee.

DRAFT DECISION II

The General Assembly decides to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 82 to 83 members and decides to appoint Israel as a member of the Committee.

DRAFT DECISION III

Questions relating to information

The General Assembly requests the Committee on Information to consider on a priority basis, at its sixteenth session, recent initiatives regarding the creation of new United Nations information centres and to make a recommendation to the General Assembly on this matter, bearing in mind the need for improved criteria for the establishment of information centres.